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Nanty Glo Acid Mine Drainage Treatment System Dedication

NANTY GLO, PENNSYLVANIA – The Cambria County Conservation and Recreation Authority will host a dedication ceremony of the Nanty Glo Acid Mine Drainage Treatment System on Tuesday, March 29, 2005 at 11:00 a.m. The ceremony to celebrate the completion of this passive treatment system to remove acid mine drainage pollutants and promote restoration of the aquatic ecosystem of approximately five miles of the South Branch of Blacklick Creek, from Nanty Glo to Vintondale in Cambria County, Pennsylvania, will take place at the site entrance located off PA State Route 271 in the Borough of Nanty Glo.

The Nanty Glo Ecosystem Restoration Project was accomplished through a partnership between the Cambria County Conservation and Recreation Authority (CCCRA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the state Department of Environmental Protection and others, with over $3 million of funding obtained by Congressman John Murtha. The CCCRA worked with the Corps to plan and design this project from a conceptual study of acid mine drainage problems in the Conemaugh River Basin through the many details and technical challenges of construction.

“Restoring our environment benefits everyone, not just the fish,” Murtha said. “Clean streams attract anglers, wildlife watchers and in larger streams, boaters. And the availability of these activities along Blacklick Creek will help to attract visitors, especially since the stream parallels the popular Ghost Town Trail.”

Thomas Strittmatter, Chairman of the Board of Directors at CCCRA is quick to point out that, “Without all the partners that have worked on this project for more than ten years, we would never have reached the completion of this project.”

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation provided the CCCRA a Growing Greener Grant of over $600,000 and an additional $400,000 directly through DEP abandoned mine funding as well as technical assistance during the design and construction of the project. "We at DEP are very proud to have partnered with CCCRA and the various other organizations involved in the creation of this treatment system which will help to restore a functioning ecosystem in the South Branch Blacklick Creek," said J. Scott Roberts, DEP Deputy Secretary for Mineral Resources Management. "We know this endeavor will not only help restore life to the stream, but will also improve the water quality as it flows from the South Branch into the Blacklick Creek and then into Conemaugh River Lake."

Others who contributed time, money and expertise to make this important ecosystem restoration project a reality include the U.S. Department of Interior’s Office of Surface Mining, the Western Pennsylvania Watershed Protection Program, the Blacklick Creek Watershed Association,

the Blacklick Valley Industrial Development Association, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the Borough of Nanty Glo and the local property owners. Hedin Environmental of Pittsburgh and GAI Consultants, Inc. designed the project.

Acid drainage from the abandoned Webster Mine, one of four significant sources of abandoned mine drainage in the South Branch Blacklick Creek Watershed, was discharging directly into Pergrin Run. Now the mine water is piped from the mine, under State Route 271 and Pergrin Run, into the passive treatment system constructed on 19-acres between Pergrin Run and the South Branch of Blacklick Creek. The water flows into two settling ponds which filter the water through a mixture of limestone and mushroom compost. This process adds alkalinity to the water, raising the pH level from around 2.0 (similar to battery acid) to close to neutral (7.0 pH). Raising the pH causes the dissolved metals in the water, primarily iron and aluminum, to "drop out" of the water in the ponds. Next, the water flows into the "finishing" wetland which completes raising the pH to slightly above neutral. The water, now able to sustain aquatic life, is discharged into Pergrin Run which flows into the South Branch of Blacklick Creek just downstream of the treatment system. The improved water also helps to further neutralize and buffer water in the stream from other acid mine drainage sources.

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